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EC63-640 Mastitis the Menace : Preventing Mastitis by Better Herd Management

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THE MENACE

Preventing Mastitis by Better Herd Management * *

EXTENSION SERVICE
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Preventing Mastitis by Better Herd Management

Proper management of the dairy cow is very important in maintaining good udder health. The modern dairy cow is selected for high production and regular reproduction. These demands tax the cow's ability to resist disease. Good management practices which contribute to the comfort of the cow are very important.

Feeding

Whether feeding has any effect on the number of cases and severity of mastitis is a much debated question. There is no clearcut evidence that heavy feeding or particular feeds have any effect on mastitis.

Heavy feeding for increased production may sometimes contribute to mastitis. Such cases probably result from the extra strain that increased production places on an already infected or otherwise predisposed udder, rather than from the amount or type of feed.

Feeding for maximum production subjects a cow's udder to maximum stress and any weakness is likely to be exaggerated. During treatment for acute infection, reduce feed so that the udder is given the greatest chance for recovery.

Feeding antibiotics has not shown any preventive value in controlled experiments involving udder infections.

As a general recommendation, changes in feeding practices should be gradual. Feed cows high quality roughages and a balanced grain ration.

Cow Comfort

Cows need to be kept comfortable. During cold weather they need warm beds in an open shed or barn. Plenty of clean, dry bedding is essential. This will lessen udder injury and reduce udder inflammation caused by cows lying on cold damp floors or the ground. Ample space, (60 to 70 square feet) in the open shed will help prevent udder injuries and aid in keeping udders clean. Free stall housing or the individual loafing stall systems provide comfortable beds for cows.

For maximum cow comfort, you must control flies and insects. Keep cows away from cold drafts and winds. Never handle cows roughly. The

owner or herdsman who likes to work with cows will probably be more successful in keeping cows comfortable, than a person who dislikes cows.

Dry Cow Management

Care of the dry cow may be the key to trouble-free lactation. To turn cows dry, prepare them by reducing their feed. Continue regular milking until the milk flow decreases, then stop milking. Keep the cow out of the milking parlor and away from the milking operation.

A check should be made as the cow is turned dry. Avoid milking for a few days, then strip out the old milk. You may have to repeat this several times.

This is an excellent time to treat if infectious bacteria are present. Make a later check to be sure the treatment worked. Feed cows so they are in good flesh, but not overly fat, when they freshen.

Fresh Cows

Cows should calve in clean, well-bedded, comfortable box stalls free from wind and draft. Cows may develop mastitis soon after calving because of strain and congestion of the udders. Handle the cow with a congested udder carefully. Unless milk fever is a problem, relieve the udder frequently during the first few days. It may help to gently massage the udder with warm water or a mild lubricant. Rub the udder in a backward and upward direction. Avoid heavy grain feeding and be sure plenty of drinking water is available.

Prevention and Treatment of Udder Injuries

Many udder injuries can lead to mastitis. Injuries may be caused by one or a combination of the following:

1. Udders can be injured by being bumped against high door sills, logs, brush or old machinery in the pasture or dry lot.

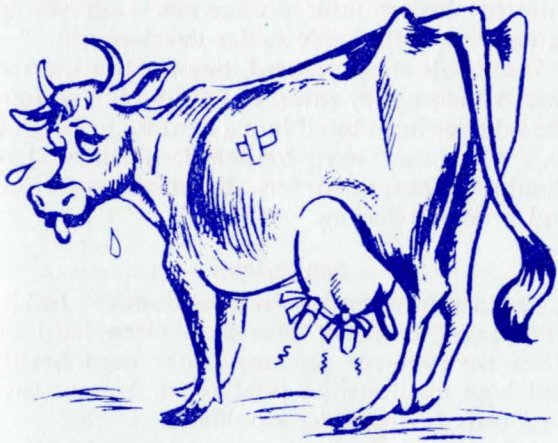
2. Udders can be bruised when cows are run by dogs, horses, or humans.

3. Teats that are stepped on, frozen, cut or scratched, chapped, hooked by horned cattle or injured in any way can cause mastitis.

4. Long, pendulous udders are more easily injured than properly attached udders, therefore, for the general health of the herd, eliminate cows with low-hanging, pendulous udders.

Mastitis can be spread by cows wading in stagnant pools, farm ponds, and muddy yards, pastures, or passageways.

All injuries of teats or udder should be treated promptly by a competent veterinarian.



Vaccination

Immunization of dairy animals against infectious mastitis is complicated because many different kinds of bacteria cause mastitis. Vaccination of dairy cows against mastitis is still in the experimental stage. Evidence indicates that protection given by the experimental vaccines is not complete. The proper vaccine may aid control of certain kinds of infection by:

1. Limiting the spread of infection from cow to cow.

2. Reducing "flare-ups" of acute mastitis in individual cows.

Vaccines should be used only under the supervision of a competent veterinarian.

No vaccine will eliminate the need for sound management, proper milking procedures and adequate sanitation.

Inheritance

Mastitis is not inherited. The susceptibility to mastitis may be inherited. Large, pendulous udders that are inherited are more easily injured than properly attached udders. There are other inherited udder conditions which are susceptible to mastitis.

Herd Replacements

Healthy, home-raised heifers are the best herd replacements. Select heifers from good producing cow families and from cows with the proper udder conformation.

Do not let calves suck each other. Remove extra teats from calves because they may become infected during milk production. Cull young cattle with undesirable udder development.

If animals are purchased, buy bred or unbred heifers before they calve. Carefully observe purchased cows introduced into a herd for at least 30 days after they have freshened. Their udders should be examined for abnormalities before and after purchasing.

Sanitation

Produce milk under the most sanitary conditions possible. Clean cows in a clean barn or clean environment promote better herd health and high quality milk production. Manure-covered teats invite udder trouble.

Summary

Management factors involved in outbreaks of mastitis include poor housing, lack of adequate bedding, exposure to bad weather, mechanical injuries, improper feeding, improper drying off technique, and lack of care of dry and recently freshened cows.

Produce milk under the most sanitary conditions possible. Dispose of manure and waste material properly. Prevent mastitis through sanitation.

The subject of mastitis will be covered in six circulars. Information in the circulars will be as follows:

EC 63-639 Mastitis and Your Dairy Herd

EC 63-640 Preventing Mastitis by Better Herd Management

EC 63-641 The Milking Machine and Mastitis

EC 63-642 Preventing Mastitis with Better Milking Practices

EC 63-643 Preventing Spread of Mastitis

EC 63-644 Mastitis and Public Health

Prepared through the cooperation of the Nebraska Mastitis Committee, C. W. Nibler, chairman, P. H. Cole, secretary.